

KOL NIDRE — A JEWISH PRAYER TO ABSOLVE ALL VOWS

The Reader says thrice:
...the knowledge we have ...
and with the knowledge of this congregation, we give leave
to pray with them that have transgressed.

All vows, bonds, devotions, promises, obligations, penalties and oaths: wherewith we have vowed, sworn, devoted and bound ourselves: from this Day of Atonement unto the next Day of Atonement, may it come unto us for good: lo, all these, we repent us in them. They shall be absolved, released, annulled, made void, and of none effect: they shall not be binding nor shall they have any power. Our vows shall not be vows: our bonds shall not be bonds; and our oaths shall not be oaths.

Reader and Congregation thrice:
And all the congregation of the children of Israel shall be
forgiven of the sins that sinners among them:

The above is an actual photographic illustration of a London edition published under the authority of the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. It shows the notorious Kol

The Kol Nidre is a Jewish prayer named, from its opening words, "All vows" (kol-nidre). It is based on the declaration of the Talmud, Book of Nedarim, 23A-23B:

"He who wishes that his vows and oaths shall have no value, stand up at the beginning of the year and say: 'All vows which I shall make during the year shall be of no value.'"

It would be pleasant to be able to declare that this is merely one of the curiosities of the darkness which covers the Talmud, but the fact is that Kol Nidre is not only an ancient curiosity; it is also a modern practice. In the volume of revised Festival Prayers, published in 1919 by the Hebrew Publishing Company, New York, the prayer appears in its fullness:

"All vows, obligations, oaths, or anathemas, pledges of all names, which we have vowed, sworn, devoted, or bound ourselves to, from this day of atonement, until the next day of atonement (whose arrival we hope for in happiness) we repent, beforehand, of them all, they shall all be deemed

absolved, forgiven, annulled, void and made of no effect; they shall not be binding, nor have any power; the vows shall not be reckoned vows, the obligations shall not be obligatory, nor the oaths considered as oaths."

If this strange statement were something dug out of the misty past, it would scarcely merit attention, but as being part of a revised Jewish prayer book printed in the United States in 1919, and as being one of the high points of the Jewish religious celebration of the New Year, it cannot be lightly dismissed after attention has once been called to it.

Excuses Perjury

One of the most important aspects of Kol Nidre is that it suborns or excuses perjury in the Courts in the case of Orthodox Jewish witnesses, whose testimony, of course, is rendered worthless by it.

If the prayer were a request for forgiveness for the broken vows of the past, normal human beings could quite understand it. Vows, promises, obligations and pledges are broken, sometimes by weakness of will to perform them, sometimes by reason of forgetfulness, sometimes by sheer inability to do the thing we thought we could do. Human experience is neither Jew nor Gentile in that respect.

But the Kol Nidre is a holy advance notice, given in the secrecy of the synagogue, that no promise whatever shall be binding, and more than not being binding, is there and then violated before it is ever made.

Breaks Down Confidence

The scope of the prayer is "from this day of atonement, until the next day of atonement."

The prayer looks wholly to the future, "we repent, beforehand, of them all."

The prayer breaks down the common ground of confidence between men — "the vows shall not be reckoned vows; the obligations shall not be obligatory, nor the oaths considered oaths."

It requires no argument to show that if this prayer be really the rule of faith and conduct for the Jews who utter it, the ordinary social and business relations are impossi-

תְּבִקְרָבָם: דַּתְּכָלְלִי: בְּדַתְּכָלְלִי: כָּלְנִידְרֵי. וְנִידְרֵי. וְנִידְרֵי. וְנִידְרֵי.
וְשְׁבָטְשָׁתִי. וְנִידְרֵא. וְדַאֲשְׁתָּקְעָנָא. וְדַאֲשְׁרָקָנָא.
וְדַאֲפְרָא אֶלְגְּשָׁתָן. מִוםְ קְפָרָסָה וְהַזְּדִים כְּפָרָסָה
תְּבָא אַלְעַט לְפָקָה. קְלִוָּן אַתְּרָפָא בְּזָוּן. בְּלִוָּן דָּן
שָׂרוֹן. שְׂבִיכָוּן. שְׂבִיכָוּן. בְּטָלוֹן וְמַבְטָלוֹן. לְאַשְׁרָדוֹן.
וְלֹא גְּמָנָן: גְּמָנָן לְאַנְדָּר. אַפְּנָהָן לְאַאֲפָהָן.

Reader and Congregation thrice:
תְּמַהְתָּל שְׁחָתָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְרַע רַע בְּחַבְבָּם כִּי

Nidre prayer, in English and Hebrew, the wording being almost identical with that of the New York edition.

ble to maintain with them.

Samuel Roth, in his book "Jews Must Live," boldly states:

"Certainly no other religion in the world has offered the world a spectacle as contradictory, as malicious, as full of the spirit of unreasonableness as the Jewish recital of the prayer KOL NIDRE during YOM KIPPUR."

"No matter what business he may undertake to promote with his neighbor, be it material or moral, he wants the Lord to understand in advance that there will be one implicit condition (a condition, however, he does not undertake to explain before entering into an argument): the execution of it must be favorable to Him, the Lord God, or it will be considered by the Jew void, of no account, utterly useless, as if it had never been mentioned, as if nothing relating to it had ever been negotiated".

"The Jew denies by his recital of Kol Nidre, even before he undertakes it, any possible responsibility in crime. Can it be doubted what a fearful influence for evil this must exert on his character as a citizen and as a human being?"

NEGRO "ANTI-SEMITISM"

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discussing the existence and extent of anti-Semitism among Negroes."

However after a Negro official in an infelicitous fit of temper invoked Hitler, Jewish patience was exhausted. On February 3, 1966, according to the New York Daily Post (March 18, 1966):

"Clifford Brown, a Negro and a local officer of CORE, declared to an audience, including a number of Jews: Hitler made one mistake — he didn't kill enough of you Jews. I am a racist and proud of it."

This understandably provoked a storm. When in answer to violent protests CORE spokesmen merely said they would investigate the outburst to determine the "context of the remark about Hitler," Will Maslow, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, according to HUMAN EVENTS, (Feb. 26, 1966) "resigned from the national board of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), accusing the civil rights group of reacting with 'flabby' moral fibre" to the Hitler reference. Maslow said that it was inconceivable that "any context would make Brown's outrageous statement permissible." Time Magazine (Sept. 9, 1966) reports as follows:

"Supported mainly by contributions from whites, the majority of them Jews, CORE experienced a dramatic drop in income after a Mount Vernon, N.Y. CORE official said in a speech that Hitler's big mistake was that he had not killed more Jews . . . CORE's income is running at a rate about half of last year's \$800,000 . . ."

Sick of You Cats

Soon after the Mount Vernon blunder, in a Greenwich Village meeting, further unfortunate references to the Nazi era occurred. When two Negro intellectuals spoke slightly of two Jewish Civil Rights marchers "martyred" in the South, someone remonstrated and referred "to the six million Jews killed by the Nazis." Thereupon the Negro Jazz musician, Archie Shepp, retorted that he was "sick of you cats talking about the six million Jews." And the once celebrated Negro, Le-

Roi Jones, according to Midstream: A Monthly Jewish Review (April, 1966) said that "He had 'his own dead to mourn' and therefore was bored with any reference to other victims of racism, whenever the six million Jewish victims of Nazi racism were called to his attention."

Therefore Midstream accuses LeRoi Jones of speaking "with a certain kind of German accent"! In the conservative, Christian National Review Max Geltman in June, 1966, frankly entitled an article, "The Negro-Jewish Confrontation," and the editors introduced it as follows:

"Negro anti-Semitism in the big cities is a fact," says Mr. Geltman. He suggests that Jewish shopkeepers move out of Watts and Harlem and that Negroes go into trade. (June 28, 1966, p. 621)

At any rate, the American Jewish leadership has reluctantly come to recognize that the Negro is not pro-Jewish and tends to resent Jewish direction of Negro organizations. Now the emerging Negroes want more power for themselves, they want to come to own the apartments and the businesses in Negro areas, and they resent landlords and businessmen who make their money in Harlem and Watts, but live in plush White suburbs.

WHY ARE JEWS DISLIKED BY NEGROES?

Why are Jews universally disliked? It is not because they are Jews, but because of what they have done and continue to do to their host nation.

A partial answer may be found in the following revealing excerpt from the Los Angeles Herald Dispatch, a patriotic Negro publication:

"When the Negro is born, he stands naked before the Jew. And the Jew stands ready to clothe him in physical and mental raiment which has been concocted to guarantee himself in running profit for many years to come.

"He is prepared to regulate the Negro's life from the cradle to the grave. Ninety per cent of what the Negro uses for food, clothing and shelter; and everything which stimulates his mental and physical environment is manufactured and sold to him by the Jew. And the only reason he gets free air is that the Jew has not yet figured out a way to bottle it up and sell it to him.

"Our mental powers are damaged almost beyond repair by the propaganda the Jew feels is necessary to keep us in tow as his chief commodity and source of revenue . . .

"Rabbi Levensen said in his article that after selling the Negro all of his necessities including the rent of his home, it was necessary for the Jew to sell him the liquor that he must have to keep him from despising himself . . .

"The Jew justly despises every cell and every fibre of our moral and physical being. Why? Because he knows the depths to which we have sunk in this American civilization more than anyone else in the world. He has wrapped himself around our wretched souls and capitalized on our misery for as long as we can remember . . . What other race of men would have stood by while the Jews enslaved their women, working them for nothing in sweat-shop conditions, and robbing them when they emerged to buy the necessities of life from him . . .

"Compare the well bred Jewish children with the children of our men who would rather send their money to the Jew through the liquor store, leaving their own children to roam the streets unsupervised, unloved and unfed. And those of us who strive for respectability find life almost unbearable as a result of heavy pressures from Jewish mortgagors, loan dealers, license officials and other standard bearers of economic torture who consistently hound us. Through artful deceit in the form of feigned friendship, the Negro is duped into the belief that the Jew is the Negro's common brother in persecution. But no man on earth can claim that dubious distinction."